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opportunities to better themselves and the country instead of waiting for the government or an NGO to bring them assistance.

In remarks delivered by Protocol Officer Ephraim Teage, the Vice President lauded the program for providing a realistic solution to some of the capacity development issues plaguing Liberia.

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## USAID Advancing Youth project launched

In her last week on the job in Liberia, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield joined representatives of the Office of the Vice President, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports at the YMCA gymnasium on Monrovia's Crown Hill to officially launch the new USAID Advancing Youth project, aimed at addressing the educational and work skills needs of Liberia's youth.

Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield said that the new program was the "right program at the right time" as the youth are one of Liberia's greatest potential assets, and that helping Liberia's youth is something near to her heart.

"Both the President and I agree that if given the resources and opportunities, these young people can help fulfill the President's dream of having Liberia be a middle income country by 2030" said Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield.

The Ambassador also took the opportunity to encourage the youth to actively seek out



**US Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield addresses the audience**

The Vice President's Protocol Officer went on to say "USAID Advancing Youth couldn't have come at a better time".

Following the official launch attendants were invited to view the wares of local artisans who will be involved in training the youth through USAID's Advancing Youth program. School officials were also invited to select books donated by the Brothers Brothers Foundation for use in their schools. **i**

## Monrovia Power Project phase II completed with ribbon cutting

The second phase of the Monrovia Power Project came to an official end on March 27th with a ribbon cutting ceremony at the Mahwah Clinic on Bushrod Island.

The Monrovia Power Project's first phase ended in 2011 when the new 10 Mega-watt high speed diesel power station was handed over to the Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC) in a ceremony involving Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, and USAID Liberia Mission Director Patricia Rader.

At the time, the new power station effectively doubled the power generation capacity of the LEC and was lauded by President Sirleaf in her remarks during the ceremony. The President was pleased to note the positive impact the new power station would have on the lives of Liberians, and encouraged the LEC to work hard at extending the reach of the new power station to large numbers of customers.



**Mission Director Rader speaks to the Chief Medical Officer of Mahwah Clinic**

The 2nd phase of the Monrovia Power Project was implemented by UNOPS and focussed on extending the reach of the LEC power transmission grid, and connecting 69 new and high value customers to the grid.

The 69 customers were identified as corporations and entities who were willing and able to pay the LEC regularly and reliably. The connection of these customers provides the LEC with a vital source of steady revenue which will be key to its continued success as a solvent utility.

Prior to the ribbon cutting ceremony Mission Director Rader was taken on a tour to visit some of the newly connected entities, stopping at Toyota Dealership Reelin' Liberia, GT Bank, and Mahwah Clinic where managers explained the impact the LEC connection would have on their businesses, and the positive implications for their customers. ★

## National Elections Commission hosts lessons learned conference

With a national voter registration exercise, a national referendum, presidential and legislative elections, and a presidential election runoff, 2011 proved to be an extremely busy and high profile year for the National Elections Commission (NEC).

It was only natural that there would be lessons to be learned by examining what worked and what didn't during the year, so on Thursday, February 23, the NEC opened a three day conference to do just that. The USAID-supported conference was attended by a wide range of stakeholders including political parties, civil society organizations, donor organizations, and government representatives.

The USAID Building Sustainable Elections Support in Liberia project, implemented by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), provided technical and organizational support to the NEC to ensure the success of the conference.

Speaking at the opening of the conference, US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield praised the NEC for their role in organizing and conducting the 2011 Presidential and Legislative Elections, calling them "a model for free, fair, and transparent elections".

Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield went on to encourage the conference participants to review the electoral legal framework and support decentralization efforts. ★

## University of Liberia, USAID, and others launch Center for Excellence in Health and Life Sciences

City hall was the venue on March 26th as the new Center for Excellence in Health and Life Sciences project was launched during a well-attended ceremony.

The ceremony featured keynote remarks by USAID Mission Director Patricia Rader and Minister of Foreign Affairs Augustin Ngafuan.



Guests of Honor at the launch ceremony

Dr. Emmet Dennis, University of Liberia President, and representatives from Indiana University and University of Massachusetts were also in attendance.

The CEHLS project aims to build the capacity of the University of Liberia in academic and research programs that address a national shortage of health care workers.

This is the third Center of Excellence established in Liberia by USAID, the other two being the Center of Excellence in Engineering also at the University of Liberia and the Center of Excellence in Agriculture at Cuttington University. *i*

## General Auditing Commission and USAID sign Memorandum of Understanding

On Tuesday, March 13th, USAID and the General Auditing Commission of the Republic of Liberia signed a Memorandum of understanding that enables the Commission to conduct audits on USAID funded projects, on behalf of USAID.

The Memorandum was signed by Acting Auditor General Winsley S. Nanka and USAID Liberia Deputy Mission Director Kimberly Rosen.

Both Mr. Nanka and Ms. Rosen described the Memorandum as being indicative of the strong performance of the Commission and USAID's confidence in it.

Ms. Rosen said "a highly effective PFM and Public Procurement system in Liberia is important because it reduces fiduciary risks and increases the speed and efficiency of GOL budget execution, and the General Auditing Commission plays a vitally important oversight role in maintaining this effectiveness."

The Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs was also represented at the ceremony by Henry B. Horton Jr., Acting Deputy Minister for Administration at the Ministry.

Mr. Horton expressed thanks to USAID for its support to the GAC and hoped that the support would continue in the coming years. He also reaffirmed the pivotal role played by the GAC in Liberia, saying "we have seen the GAC as a checkmate of the Government and they have done so well". *i*



Deputy Mission Director Rosen addresses the audience



## USAID RBHS renovated nursing schools handed over

The first quarter of 2012 saw two ceremonies in which the USAID Rebuilding Basic Health Services project (RBHS) handed over completely renovated nursing schools in Monrovia and Zorzor.

The first handover was of Tubman National Institute of Medical Arts (TNIMA) at JFK Hospital in Monrovia on February 3rd. Deputy Mission Director Kimberly Rosen participated in a ceremony marking the handover with Minister of Health and Social Welfare Dr. Walter Gwenigale.



The renovated auditorium at TNIMA

The TNIMA renovation cost about \$500,000 and included the main auditorium, 10 classrooms, the library, the simulation center/skills laboratory, science labs, and offices.



Deputy Mission Director Rosen participates in the ribbon cutting

Deputy Mission Director Rosen described the renovations as part of the response to the challenges being faced by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare as it works to strengthen Liberia's health sector.

Deputy Mission Director Rosen also pointed out that USAID support to TNIMA through RBHS has also extended to the training and mentoring of instructors and clinical preceptors in effective teaching skills, as well as through the FORECAST project which provided TNIMA faculty the chance to pursue Master's Degrees.

"The training of faculty, the improvement in teaching ability, is the kind of assistance USAID is traditionally engaged in; helping Liberians to help themselves" said Ms. Rosen. *i*

The second handover was all the way out in Zorzor where Mission Director Patricia Rader handed over the newly renovated Esther Bacon School of Nursing and Midwifery (EBSNM) dormitory.



Dr. Rose Macauley, RBHS COP, recognizes the RBHS construction team

The renovations of the EBSNM dormitory were also part of the RBHS project, and were celebrated in a February 27th ceremony that included local representatives of the Government of Liberia, Paramount Chiefs, school administration officials, and the RBHS team.

The EBSNM dormitory can house 50 students and a matron, and will soon be accompanied by the newly renovated school building where the students will take classes.

During the ceremony Mission Director Rader took the opportunity to remind the faculty, administration, and students of the school that proper maintenance of the building was essential to ensuring it could be used for many years in the future. *i*



Guests of honor pose with the dormitory plaque